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Influence of Military Is Strengthened Again

Major General Wilton B. Persons yesterday began learning the duties of his new job as assistant to President Eisenhower, the powerful White House position from which Sherman Adams recently resigned. The appointment of a military man as chief of the President's staff points up the tremendous influence today of the military mind in the United States.

The two top executive officers of the nation now are military men whose lives have been influenced greatly by the protective life of the Army. This is an accurate statement of a condition that exists. It is not necessarily a criticism of a military-trained President or of selection of military men for high office. In these days when defense of democracy is the primary concern of America, many would argue that the nation should depend upon the military for leadership.

On the other hand, this post-war dependence on the military could be interpreted as a symptom of a really critical situation in our civil society. Is it possible that the U.S. is so bankrupt of men with leadership ability from the civilian population that we must turn to the military? Cognizance must be taken of the influence of World War II in moulding the national military heroes who afterwards entered the arena of politics.

The meteoric rise of military men in political offices in recent times began after that war. Examples are numerous. General George C. Marshall became Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense under President Truman. General Walter Bedell Smith was appointed ambassador to the Soviet Union and later director of the Central Intelligence Agency by President Truman. He served as Undersecretary of State for President Eisenhower.

The disadvantages of having military men as political leaders stem from their education and environment. A strict military education is too narrow to prepare a man for the diverse problems of the nation. Also, the protective environment of military life is so different from that of the civilian society that it creates a false sense of security and even an unrealistic view of what is normal. One of

the best recommendations for the new assistant to the President is that he attended Alabama Polytechnic Institute and was graduated magna cum laude from the Harvard School of Business.

This much is certain: The United States is now in a period of great influence in political life by the military mind. It is hoped that the military men can overcome their disadvantages and find answers to the critical questions of the times.